

ADE DAILY NEWS CLIPS

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First lady helps kick off Arkansas summer meals program (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

Arkansas first lady Ginger Beebe says more attention is needed toward programs across the state that provide free meals to children who might otherwise go hungry over the summer.

Beebe spoke during a kickoff event for a statewide summer meals program at the Dream Center, one site where children can receive free meals.

Beebe said the program — which is a partnership of a number of organizations including Arkansas No Kid Hungry, the Hunger Relief Alliance and the Department of Human Services — is vital because many children eat for free at school but are then left hungry during summer break.

"But that's what the partnership of everyone coming together [is for]," Beebe said. "It's really a team. ... It's a team effort to see that our children are fed."

Officials said during the event that less than 14 percent of children who received free or reduced-price lunch in Arkansas last year participated in a summer meals program, suggesting that many may be going hungry in the summertime.

Sites such as Little Rock's Dream Center, which offer the meals to children under 18, can be found at www.whyhunger.org/findfood. Families can also call (866)-3-HUNGRY or (877)-8-HAMBRE.

Beebe said the information needs to get out so families facing food insecurity can seek the help available in their community.

"We've got to spread the word so these families know in their community there is a site where their children can have food," she said. "All they have to do is show up."

Entire State to Test Teacher Evaluation System (KLRT)

LITTLE ROCK, AR - School districts across Arkansas are preparing to implement the state's new Teacher Excellence and Support System, or TESS — a process that spells out how to rate teachers' performance, helps them correct deficiencies, and, if necessary, can lead to their dismissal.

The system was tested at 11 schools this past year and will expand to a statewide pilot this year before going into effect in 2014-15.

Dr. Karen Cushman, the Arkansas Department of Education's assistant commissioner for HR licensure and educator effectiveness, is the state's point person on the transition.

Teachers will be evaluated on a variety of factors, including classroom observation and test scores. The primary goal is to find specific areas in need of improvement and then help teachers improve.

According to Cushman, novice or probational teachers will undergo a full summative evaluation covering 22 components every year, while all other teachers will undergo such an evaluation every three years. The summative evaluations will be used to create a professional growth plan so that teachers and evaluators focus on areas of deficiency.

Teachers will be given ratings in four categories: planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities. In each category, they will be scored at one of four performance levels: distinguished, proficient, basic, and unsatisfactory.

Under the law that created TESS in 2011, teachers scoring unsatisfactory for two consecutive semesters in a category will be dismissed, though that can be extended another two semesters if they show improvement.

Under the old system, teachers typically have been observed in a classroom setting by an administrator using a simple pass-fail checklist. That system routinely resulted in almost every teacher being deemed satisfactory with little follow-up development.

TESS is based on a model designed by Charlotte Danielson, a nationally recognized teacher evaluation expert. Unlike the checklist, which had no descriptors, the Danielson rubric specifically describes a teacher's level of performance in each of the 22 components. In the student engagement component, a teacher who scores basic – barely good enough, in other words – would rely mostly on worksheets. A proficient teacher, on the other hand, might ask students to hypothesize what would happen if the United States elected presidents through the popular vote rather than the Electoral College, divide students into table groups to discuss, and then have them report on the results of the discussion.

Cushman said surveys of teachers from the 11 schools piloting the program indicated that they believed it did help them improve their performance more than the old system. However, it will need to be tweaked. Despite its specificity, it remains too subjective and may need to be based more on numerical values. "We're asking people to average words, and that's difficult to do," she said.

So far, about 3,000 administrators have undergone a one-day face-to-face training on TESS, while 38,000 educators have undergone software training.

Dr. Kim Wilbanks, superintendent of the Jonesboro School District, said that teachers at Jonesboro High, one of the pilot schools, had reacted positively to the new system. "Where in the past we've used ambiguous terms and maybe not been clear on exactly what it would take for instruction to improve, this helps create a common vocabulary for administrators and teachers alike as they move towards improvement," she said.

Wilbanks said the greatest challenge to the new system is the heavy burden it places on administrators, particularly principals, whose role in schools is changing from building administrator to instructional leader. Concurrent with TESS, a principal evaluation and improvement system is being implemented known as the Leader Excellence And Development System, or LEADS. The first principal evaluation training on LEADS was June 3.

"You're going to see a new brand of administrators, and that's already the case in many school districts," Wilbanks said. "But 10 years from now, when you look at a school principal, the stereotypical image may not be what it was 10 years ago as we move toward true instructional leaders in every principal position."

Online Testing for PCSSD (KLRT)

LITTLE ROCK, AR - These days, you're lucky if you have one computer in a classroom for students to work on.

Soon all students across Arkansas will have to take *state mandated* tests online. But will school districts be ready?

Linda Remeley, Assistant Superintendent for the Pulaski County Special School District (PCSSD) knows the trial of making sure every student has a computer to use in class.

"Absolutely it's possible, we're working hard towards reaching that goal," she says.

The district will soon follow more than two dozen states, in moving all state mandated tests online.

"We're providing what you maybe call a computer but a device, per child," Remeley explains.

To help ensure teachers and administrators understand how this will work, they can get involved and ask questions through a Twitter town hall series.

"I think any way to get the message out to teachers, parents and students about what's coming, so they are better prepared," she says.

Online testing will start in the 2014 - 2015 school year.

Commentary: Two Students Serve As Governor Of Arkansas (Southwest Times Record, Commentary by Steve Brawner)

For two days last week, two teenagers served as governor of Arkansas.

Well, not really. Mike Beebe remains governor, unless he is traveling out of state, in which case Lt. Gov. Mark Darr is the state's chief executive.

The “governors” were Abby Hutton from Springdale, a student at Shiloh Christian High School, and Scott Sims from McGehee High School. The two were elected to their positions at Arkansas Girls State and Arkansas Boys State.

The weeklong camps teach nominated high school seniors about government and politics. Boys State, sponsored by the American Legion, is hosted by the University of Central Arkansas in Conway, while Girls State is sponsored by the American Legion Auxiliary and is held at Harding University in Searcy.

The students spend the week hearing speeches, going to sessions and politicking. They’re divided into two parties, where they run for many of the same local and state offices for which adults compete. At the end of the week, those elected to state offices descend on the Capitol to serve for a few hours in those positions. While Abby and Scott were sitting in the governor’s office, some of their fellow students were voting on various laws as state legislators. Two from each camp are elected to later serve as delegates to Boys Nation and Girls Nation in Washington, D.C.

How important a training ground are Boys State and Girls State? President Bill Clinton was serving as a delegate to Boys Nation when that famous photograph of him and President John F. Kennedy was taken. Mike Huckabee was governor of Boys State before he was governor of Arkansas. Mack McLarty, who served as Clinton’s chief of staff in the White House, also was a Boys State governor. Seventeen legislators in this year’s General Assembly had attended Boys State or Girls State.

I attended Boys State in 1990. I had a great time even though I didn’t campaign for any offices.

Abby occupied the governor’s office in the Capitol on Thursday, May 30, while Scott took his turn the next day. As soon as she was elected, she was whisked away from her fellow delegates and asked to appoint about 30 of them to various offices. Some, such as the director of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, were easier because she was familiar with that state agency. Others were harder.

“I didn’t know that I needed a director of the department of Social Security disability benefits,” she said. “That was interesting.”

Abby said she was already politically aware — she calls herself “kind of a states’ rights person” who believes in a small federal government — before she arrived at Girls State. She’s a Student Council president who is active in her church and community. She knows what she wants to do in life: work as an industrial engineer. She’s also a pilot who volunteers at the Veterans Affairs hospital with her dog, Annie.

Scott, meanwhile, is a good student with a 31 on his ACT who is still mulling his options for college and career. He was not particularly politically aware before arriving at Boys State. Instead, he’s been preoccupied with excelling in school and growing up, which is exactly what he is supposed to be doing. “Before Boys State here, I would have probably told you I don’t have much of an opinion,” he said. “Between football and ... my four AP classes, I haven’t really had time to keep up with politics or anything. It’s hard to find time to breathe and sleep.”

Neither had thought much about running for office before this summer, but after their weeklong immersions into government and politics, both are interested now. But neither point to particular

issues that would motivate them. Instead, they're more concerned with the character of elected officials. Abby referred to the current IRS scandal and the legal travails of Arkansas' former treasurer, Martha Shoffner.

She said that, in her election, she received a standing ovation after a speech where she said she would govern with a servant's heart, with Jesus as her example.

"He would bend down and wash dirty, dusty, awful feet, and I think that's the spirit each of our politicians have to have," she said.

A servant's heart. Who would vote against that?

Cooper Teacher Wins State Award (nwaonline.com)

BENTONVILLE — A Cooper Elementary School teacher has been named the 2013 History Teacher of the Year for Arkansas.

Chrissy Hallwachs, who teaches social studies and literacy to third- and fourth-graders, said she was "very surprised" upon being notified of her award earlier this week.

The award comes from the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. Hallwachs will receive \$1,000 and a certificate of recognition. Books and historical resources also will be presented in her name to the Cooper library.

A panel of judges will consider her for the \$10,000 National History Teacher of the Year award. The national winner will be announced in the early fall.

Hallwachs said the mother of one of her students nominated her for the award. She said she doesn't consider herself a history expert.

"I just like making my lessons fun," she said.

For a lesson on the Revolutionary War, for example, she got students to break up into three groups: patriots, loyalists and undecided citizens. The patriots and loyalists had to try to recruit the undecided citizens to join their group. The citizens had to make a list of pros and cons for joining a group.

Hallwachs, a Bella Vista resident, has been a teacher for 22 years, including the past nine in the Bentonville School District.

Even though she's not strictly a history teacher, Hallwachs finds ways to integrate history into her daily lessons, said Matt Young, Cooper Elementary's principal.

"Chrissy makes history come alive for the students," Young said. "For students who aren't engaged, she finds out whatever it takes to engage them. She uses different pieces of literature to bring history

into the classroom, and when she talks, you can see the excitement in her eyes. The kids pick up on that.”

The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, founded in 1994, is a nonprofit organization devoted to the improvement of history education.

As another part of Hallwachs’ award, Cooper will be named a Gilder Lehrman Affiliate School. Affiliate Schools receive invitations to regional forums with noted historians; access to an exclusive section of their website containing teacher resources; priority access to teacher seminars and traveling exhibitions; and free mailings of classroom materials.